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# Evolving Ivans and Static Soviet Women: The Gender Dichotomy in Film Portrayals of Russian Men and Women in Western Films (1939-2010)

Krysten S. Collier

*The College at Brockport*, collierks@hotmail.com

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Evolving Ivans and Static Soviet Women:  
The Gender Dichotomy in Film Portrayals of Russian Men and Women in Western  
Films  
(1939-2010)

by  
Krysten S. Collier

A thesis submitted to the Department of History of the State University of New York  
College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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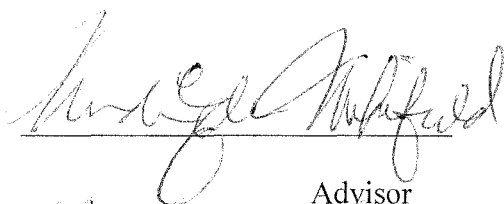
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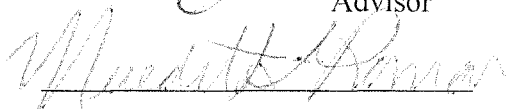
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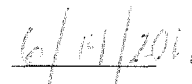
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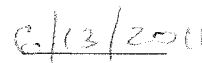
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### **Abstract**

The study of the type of films Americans create and consume demonstrates how cultural attitudes are often reflected and reinforced in Western films. Based on the viewing and analysis of approximately two dozen films, I have determined that Western filmmakers working between 1939 and 2010 have chosen to depict Russian men and women in decidedly different ways. Representations of male Russian characters shifted significantly based on the state of foreign relations. In contrast, female Russian film characters changed little over time. In the interest of producing profitable entertainment, filmmakers developed this formula prior to the start of the Cold War and have continued to employ it. This gender dichotomy is representative of a melding of the belief in the superiority of Western society and patriarchal attitudes. This study documents the changes in depictions of Russian men while also describing the static portrayal of Russian women. Filmmakers are likely to adhere to their current methods of developing Russian characters as long as the films they make continue to be profitable.

## Introduction

Films created and consumed by Americans often reflect broadly held cultural values. Hoping to make a profit, filmmakers often choose to echo already extant ideas and beliefs rather than challenge them.<sup>1</sup> Given this information, scholars may analyze films in order to discern American attitudes towards specific subjects, people, and places. I have chosen to analyze films in order to assess changes in American attitudes towards Russia over time. After viewing a number of American and British films made between 1939 and 2010 with Russian protagonists and villains, I became aware of certain patterns. For instance, the cinematic portrayal of Russian men and the Soviet state varied depending on the state of the relationship between the United States and Russia. In contrast, the portrayals of Russian women remained fairly static regardless of world events and attitudes. The vast majority of cinematic Russian women from *Ninotchka* in 1939 to *Evelyn Salt* in 2010 are beautiful, intelligent women who often possess special talents. Ultimately, however, these women prove highly susceptible to the charms of Western men who can extricate them, literally or figuratively, from the hold of the Soviet or Russian state.<sup>2</sup>

Arguably, the patriarchal values of American society led filmmakers to create, and audiences to accept, a gendered dichotomy between male and female Russian

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<sup>1</sup> Randall M. Miller, ed., *The Kaleidoscopic Lens: How Hollywood Views Ethnic Groups* (Englewood, NJ: Jerome S. Ozer, 1980), 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Strada and Harold Troper argue that female Russian characters can be seen “nuzzling up to perfection” in times of good relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. While their argument works well in the case of male Russian characters, it fails to account for the almost uniform character treatments of Russian female film characters. Michael Strada and Harold Troper, *Friend or Foe?: Russians in American Film and Foreign Policy, 1933-1991* (Lanhan, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1997), viii.

characters. While cinematic Western men arguably had a lot to offer these cinematic Russian women, it also seems wishful thinking on the part of Western filmmakers that nearly all Russian women would reject their native country and easily shed their ideological viewpoints for love and material comforts. Though securing one's personal safety has served as the most convincing motive for cinematic exodus from Russia, it still placed an emphasis on the power of the Western male who often played a large role in making this flight possible. These cinematic romances between Russian women and Western men reinforced patriarchy and symbolized Western domination in the much broader conflict between the East and the West. Western men won small victories by corrupting the Communist values of Russian women or by rescuing Russian women from the highly vilified Soviet state.

Unlike other scholars who have completed similar studies regarding portrayals of Russians in American films, I have chosen to limit my study to films with narratives that take place approximately at the time the film was made.<sup>3</sup> This means

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<sup>3</sup> Very few scholars have produced studies strictly about the portrayals of Russians in American films during the Cold War. Political scientist Michael Strada and Harold Troper, a professor of the History of Education, co-authored the pioneer study in this field. In their 1997 book, *Friend or Foe?: Russians in American Film and Foreign Policy, 1933-1991*, Strada and Troper argue that there was an intrinsic link between film portrayals of Russians and foreign relations between the United States and Russia during the Cold War. Strada and Troper, *Friend or Foe*, vii-ix. ; The following year, Azary E. Messerer's dissertation in the field of communications, *Russian Images in American Films 1933-1995*, offered similar conclusions about the close relationship between America's Cold War foreign policy and the portrayals of Russians in American films. Azary E. Messerer, "Russian Images in American Films 1933-1995" (PhD diss., New York University, 1998), 318. Mostly recently, historian Harlow Robinson has argued in his 2007 study, *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians: Biography of an Image*, that American filmmakers tended to create and constantly reinforce stereotypes of Soviet Russians due to the societal requirement described by Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin for the existence of an "other" in order to achieve self definition. Harlow Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians: Biography of an Image* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007) Robinson's study is also unique in that he has chosen to focus on Russian actors and filmmakers in Hollywood, as well as Hollywood films featuring Russian characters. Unfortunately, this distinction has rendered his study somewhat disjointed, especially in comparison to the highly structured studies

that my study will exclude films depicting Czarist and Revolutionary Russia. While these films are also products of the times in which they were made, they resonate differently with audiences because of their historical context.

### ***Ninotchka* Sets the Tone: Films Made Prior to US Involvement in World War II**

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 marked the beginning of a greatly strained relationship between the United States and the newly formed Soviet Union. American animosity towards Russia began to develop prior to the start of the Cold War. The American public feared that the United States might fall prey to Communism. Ultimately, these fears proved to be greatly overblown and the First Red Scare (1919-1920) quickly subsided, but strong anti-communist sentiments remained in the US.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, American intervention in the Russian Civil War and American hesitancy to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR, which lasted until November 1933, contributed to the difficulties in American and Soviet relations. Severe repression in Stalinist Russia, the West's policy of appeasement of Hitler, and

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of Strada and Troper and Messerer. Robinson's study also differs from that of Strada and Troper in that he has chosen to document depictions of Russians in American films released after the Cold War concluded. Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood*, 10. While this is admittedly a distinction of Robinson's study, arguably it is significant that Robinson's study was published ten years after Strada and Troper's study. Strada and Troper conclude their book by discussing the relative lack of Russian films characters during the period from 1991-1995. Given the publication date of Strada and Troper's study it may have been too presumptive of them to make definitive arguments about the post-Cold War trends in the portrayals of Russians. Additionally, the final cinematic period Messerer chose to analyze in his study ranged from 1987 to 1995, covering *perestroika*, *glasnost*, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Messerer notes that improved relations during this period between the United States and Russia have resulted in more "well balanced and realistic" images of Russia and Russian people in American films. Messerer, "Russian Images in American Films," 320. However, like Strada and Troper, Messerer produced his study shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and states in his introduction that "there is a realistic possibility that Communists will return to power in Russia." Messerer, "Russian Images in American Films," 2. Robinson's more extensive discussion of film portrayals of Russians in post-Cold War American films seems to be more of a product of timing rather a purposefully decided focal difference.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28.



the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact further diminished the possibility of improving relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

In 1939, MGM Studios released the film *Ninotchka*, setting powerful cinematic precedents for the depiction of the Russian people and the Soviet state based upon extant audience preconceptions about the USSR.<sup>6</sup> In the film, three members of the Russian Board of Trade are sent to pre-World War II Paris in order to sell some of the imperial jewels for money to buy tractors. Once in Paris, the agents succumb to the material comforts and splendors of the West. While staying in the Royal Suite at the Hotel Clarence, a Russian waiter with continuing loyalties to the living members of the Russian royal family discovers the nature of Iranoff (Sig Rumann), Buljanoff (Felix Bressart), and Kopalski's (Alexander Granach) mission to Paris and informs the exiled Russian Grand Duchess Swana (Ina Claire) of the whereabouts of the jewels. Desperate for money and believing herself entitled to them, Swana sends her male companion, Count Leon d'Algout (Melvyn Douglas) to the Hotel Clarence in order to halt the sale of the jewels. Leon succeeds in temporarily stopping the sale of the jewels by making the existence of a dispute clear to the interested jeweler. Leon then proceeds to make friends with the agents in hopes of wearing down their resolve to sell the jewels on behalf of the USSR. However, Moscow is impatient due to the lack of progress on the sale and sends an experienced,

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<sup>5</sup>For additional background information on the beginning of the Cold War, see the first two chapters of: Powaski, *The Cold War*, 5-64.

<sup>6</sup> Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) Studios began work on *Ninotchka* in 1937. MGM developed the film as a comedy vehicle for Greta Garbo, a Swedish film star known for almost exclusively playing melancholy roles. Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 16.

no-nonsense female envoy, Ninotchka (Greta Garbo) to Paris in order to successfully close the deal.<sup>7</sup>

Though initially resistant to the charms of Count Leon and Paris in the springtime, Ninotchka eventually falls in love with both and only returns to Moscow when the Grand Duchess willingly rescinds her claim of the jewels in exchange for Ninotchka's departure. Ninotchka accepts this compromise in order to help her country, but once in Russia she is miserable without Leon. Believing it impossible that they will see one another again, Ninotchka devotes herself to her work and attempts to move on, but the Commissar of the Board of Trade sends her to Constantinople after learning about the Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopalski's most recent outlandish behavior. Once she arrives, she finds that Leon has helped the three Board of Trade members defect and start their own restaurant. He had anticipated that Moscow would send Ninotchka to Constantinople in order to bring her comrades back in line. Leon tells her that he loves her and that he will have to go on corrupting Soviet commissioners if she fails to stay with him now. Ninotchka relents, claiming that it is for "the good of [her] country" and that "[n]o one shall say Ninotchka was a bad Russian."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ninotchka*, directed by Ernst Lubitsch (1939; Warner Home Video, 2005). Throughout this paper, I have chosen to refer to all the film characters by the name with which they are most frequently addressed with or identified by in the films. It is noteworthy that the female characters in these films are generally identified by first names or nicknames while the male characters are more frequently identified by last names, especially if they are ranking officers of the police or the military. This pattern reflects the arguments in this paper. In spite of multiple achievements, cinematic Soviet women are primarily identified as objects of love or lust. Referring to the Soviet female film characters by first name or nickname only solidifies their identity as women, looking for love and protection, rather than as independent and accomplished professionals.

<sup>8</sup> *Ninotchka*.

From her first appearance in the film, the character of Nina “Ninotchka” Ivanovna Yakushova is presented as a stern, humorless, unadorned Bolshevik ideologue with unshakable faith in the righteousness of the Soviet state. When Buljanoff asks about how things are back in Moscow, Ninotchka responds by stating: “Very good. The last mass trials were a great success. There are going to be fewer but better Russians.”<sup>9</sup> Upon reaching the Hotel Clarence, Ninotchka sees an impractical ladies’ hat in the shop window and argues that such a frivolity is clearly the product of an impractical and therefore doomed society.<sup>10</sup> It is not until after Leon has awakened her sense of humor and convinced her that love is more than a “chemical” process that Ninotchka begins to appreciate the beauty of Paris and indulge herself with new clothes, including the hat she originally disdained as the hallmark of a society on the verge of collapse.<sup>11</sup>

In *Ninotchka*, the Soviet state is depicted as highly strict and often violent. Razinin, the Commissar of the Board of Trade, (Bela Lugosi) is the only high-level state official seen in the film. He is highly disconcerted by Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopalski’s continuing incompetence and is unwilling to accept Ninotchka’s request that she not be sent to Constantinople after them. Razinin is strict and unyielding, but no one is sent to Siberia in spite of fears voiced earlier by the trio of Trade Board members. While the mass trials and purges are mentioned, they do not figure prominently in the story. After a party, a drunken Ninotchka imagines herself facing a

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<sup>9</sup> In 1936, Stalin began the purges in order to eliminate military and political leaders whom he viewed as opposed to his leadership. According to Ronald E. Powaski, Stalin had purged about 35,000 Red Army officers by the end of 1938. Powaski, *The Cold War*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> *Ninotchka*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ninotchka*.

firing squad for falling in love with a Westerner, but this fate does not befall her upon returning to Moscow. As demonstrated by the censorship of Leon's letter to Ninotchka in which only the greeting and salutation of the letter are visible, the state has control over personal correspondence. Based on Ninotchka and her roommate's fear that a housemate is an informant for the Secret Police, there is also a sense that agents of the state are omnipresent in order to control and regulate behavior.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to demonstrating the USSR's strong mechanisms of control, the film also contains references to the poor material conditions of Soviet society. At the outset of the film, the Russian commission is in Paris selling imperial jewels to get foreign capital to buy tractors because there is a danger of crop failure. This implies the weakness of the Russian ruble, a lack of heavy industry, and the possibility of famine. Shortly after discovering that Ninotchka is Russian, Leon jokingly remarks that to her he has "been fascinated by your Five-Year Plan for the past fifteen years!" This comment suggests that Soviet economic development has taken place more slowly than the Soviets had originally projected.<sup>13</sup> In Moscow, Ninotchka shares a single room in an apartment with two other women and other residents must walk through the room to reach the bathroom.<sup>14</sup>

As depicted in *Ninotchka*, Soviet Russia is cold and drab. The state is inefficient, violent, and invasive. Its representatives are unyielding and unmoved by

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<sup>12</sup> *Ninotchka*.

<sup>13</sup> Stalin instituted the First Five-Year Plan in 1928. Given that *Ninotchka* was released in October 1939 and the story is supposed to take place before the start of World War II, which began in September 1939, the longest period of time that the Five-Year Plans could have been in place would be roughly eleven years. Powaski, *The Cold War*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Ninotchka*.

emotions like love, as seen in Leon's attempts to enter Russia in order to see Ninotchka. However, the Russia seen in the film is not inescapable. Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopolski defect to Constantinople and open a restaurant. While Ninotchka defects out of love for Leon and her country, she also seems more than comfortable with the accoutrements of capitalist society by the conclusion of the film.<sup>15</sup>

*Ninotchka* performed admirably at the box office, grossing \$2.2 million dollars domestically and abroad. In addition to being one of the highest grossing films of the year, *Ninotchka* also garnered critical acclaim and four Oscar nominations.<sup>16</sup> In a positive review, the *Variety* reviewer found that the numerous satirical "jabs" directed at the Soviet state are representative of the "serious intent of comparisons between the political systems in the background."<sup>17</sup> Frank S. Nugent of the *New York Times* also gave the film a highly favorable review, but argued that the film is more humorous than "honest" in its portrayal of Soviet Russia. In spite of this, Nugent began and ended his review with the statement "Stalin won't like it." He also "objected, out of charity" to *Ninotchka*'s statement regarding the value of the purges, as well as a Russian passport official's reassurances to a tourist that the towels in

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<sup>15</sup> *Ninotchka*.

<sup>16</sup> Shaw states that half of the box office for *Ninotchka* came from the overseas markets and that the film would have made more money if it had not been banned from venues in countries like Bulgaria, Estonia, and Lithuania where the leaders feared Stalin's reprisals. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War*, 23.

<sup>17</sup> Variety Staff, "*Ninotchka*," *Variety* (weekly), October 11, 1939, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117793557?refcatid=31> (accessed May 29, 2011). This excerpt of the *Ninotchka* review came from the *Variety* website. Though it originally came from a review in weekly *Variety* from October 11, 1939, I could not access this particular edition of the periodical using the *Variety* archives as I have been able to do for the vast majority of the *Variety* source material found in this paper.

Moscow hotels are hygienic because they “change the towel every week.”<sup>18</sup> Though filmmakers may prioritize high entertainment value and profits over accuracy, films still need to resonate with their audiences in order to achieve popularity. In spite of being overshadowed at the Academy Awards, audiences received *Ninotchka* warmly.

In response to the success of *Ninotchka*, MGM chose to produce a similar film the next year. *Comrade X* starred Clark Gable as McKinley B. Thompson, an American newspaper reporter called “Mac,” attempting to take a beautiful but naive Bolshevik ideologue named Golubka Yahupitz (Hedy Lamarr), but dubbed “Theodore” by the Workers’ Council so that she could join the masculine occupation of streetcar conducting, out of Russia because of her father’s fear that she would be in danger if she remained there. In the end, Theodore’s father, Vanya (Felix Bressart) is correct and Mac must save himself, Theodore, and Vanya from a firing squad convened by Theodore’s former mentor, Bastakoff. Bastakoff (Vladimir Sokoloff) has chosen to execute his own ideological and political supporters in order to prove his commitment to his new post as the Head of Censorship. Bastakoff agrees to release the trio in exchange for evidence that Mac has collected which implicates Bastakoff in the initial attempt to murder his predecessor, Commissar Vasiliev. However, after obtaining the evidence, Bastakoff has them followed. After a car chase, the trio steals a Soviet General’s tank and inadvertently lead a fleet of Soviet tanks to the Rumanian border. While the Soviet soldiers believe they are being led on

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<sup>18</sup> Frank S. Nugent, “THE SCREEN IN REVIEW; ‘*Ninotchka*,’ an Impious Soviet Satire Directed by Lubitsch, Opens at the Music Hall--New Films Are Shown at Capitol and Palace,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1939, 31.

an impromptu training exercise by their Commanding Officer, Mac, Theodore, and Vanya believe that the Soviet military is pursuing them. The film concludes with Mac, Theodore, and Vanya in the stands of a Brooklyn Dodgers game enjoying America's national pastime.<sup>19</sup>

*Comrade X* shares a number of elements with *Ninotchka*. A beautiful Russian woman discards her Communist ideals after finding love with a Western man and becoming disenchanted with the Soviet state. A likeable, apolitical Russian man also makes his escape from Russia, much like the three Board of Trade members did in *Ninotchka*. Additionally, Mac's hotel has several problems, including a shortage of towels due to theft, broken plumbing, and a stuck elevator. While the Russian protagonists and the material conditions in Russia are depicted in a comparable way in these two films, *Comrade X*, a film produced entirely after the August 1939 signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, offers a more critical portrayal of the Russian state.<sup>20</sup>

In *Comrade X*, the political climate in Russia is shown as highly unstable. The film opens with a press conference at the Kremlin with Soviet officials informing the press corps that the Head of the Secret Police has also assumed the role of the Head of Censorship due to the "malicious writings and forbidden photos" being published by a presumably Western journalist known as Comrade X. In addition to this news, the journalists are informed that the previous Head of Censorship, Comrade Malkov, was the "victim of a traffic accident" because he was "not

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<sup>19</sup> *Comrade X*, directed by King Vidor (1940; Warner Brothers Archive Collection, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> *Comrade X*.

watching his step.” Comrade Vasiliev, the new Head of Censorship, is also the target of an assassination attempt while speaking at Malkov’s funeral. Later in the film Bastakoff tells Mac that Vasiliev also perished in a traffic accident *and* that he caught pneumonia. The rapid and frequently violent turnover of commissars in *Comrade X* reinforced the frequently accurate Western perceptions of the political instability of Soviet Russia.<sup>21</sup>

*Comrade X* also affirms the perceived violent and confused nature of Communist ideals and the venality of Communist ideologues. When Vanya approaches Mac about rescuing Theodore from Russia because she is a Communist, he explains to Mac that due to ideological disagreements “the Communists are being executed so that Communism will succeed!” Vanya’s assertion is proven correct at the end of the film when Bastakoff’s followers are executed by the firing squad that Ninotchka feared but never faced. Bastakoff explains to Mac that he had ordered “the liquidation of [his] own disciples” in order to prove his commitment to his new post and the whole of the Soviet state. Overall, the depiction of Soviet Russia is more violent and harsh in *Comrade X* than in *Ninotchka*.<sup>22</sup>

*Comrade X* also fared well at the box office and garnered generally favorable reviews from the *Variety* reviewer and Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*.<sup>23</sup> The *Variety* reviewer praised the acting and claimed that *Comrade X*

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<sup>21</sup> *Comrade X*.

<sup>22</sup> *Comrade X*.

<sup>23</sup> Though I have been unable to locate a definitive final gross for *Comrade X*, the box office reports in *Variety* for individual venues report highly promising returns. For instance, according to the January 8, 1941 weekly issue of *Variety*, *Comrade X* performed well at the box office in general, but the film did particularly well at the Palace Theatre in Cincinnati, Ohio. “Picture Grosses,” *Variety* (weekly),



“resembles Garbo’s *Ninotchka* only in that it again directs well-aimed shafts of humor at Communistic actions and preachments, for plenty of rousing humor.”<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Crowther writes that “[o]bviously, the boys at Metro were laboring under the influence of their own *Ninotchka* when they made it, for the ideas are strikingly similar.” Crowther also suggests that the film’s harsh and brutal political commentary is sometimes “too grim for enjoyment, since it has to do in a jesting vein with assassination and political execution.”<sup>25</sup>

While *Ninotchka* and *Comrade X* painted a less than complimentary picture of Soviet Russia, less than a year later the state of US-Soviet relations shifted dramatically. In spite of Stalin’s intentions to maintain peace between the Soviet Union and Germany through the summer of 1941, Germany and her allies invaded Russia on June 22, 1941. The invasion garnered American support for the Soviet Army as the United States began to seek an alliance with the USSR. MGM even chose to add a new title sequence to *Comrade X* declaring that the jabs in the picture were intended as “good clean fun” and that “nothing in this story should be deemed derogatory to the brave Russian fighters.”<sup>26</sup> For the duration of the Second World War, the growing mistrust and hostility between the United States and the USSR dissolved into a convenient wartime alliance and Hollywood followed suit.

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January 8, 1941, 20. Additionally, the January 15, 1941 weekly issue of *Variety*, the Penn Theatre reports a “sensational” \$25,000 nine day total. Other theatres also seem to be pleased with the returns generated by the film. “Picture Grosses,” *Variety* (weekly), January 15, 1941, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Walt, “Comrade X,” *Variety* (weekly), December 11, 1940, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Bosley Crowther, “THE SCREEN IN REVIEW; ‘Comrade X’ and ‘Chad Hanna’ Christmas Entries at the Capitol and Roxy--New Motion Pictures Also Arrive at the Rialto and Bryant,” *New York Times*, December 26, 1940, 23.

<sup>26</sup> “Whitewashing Reds,” *Variety* (weekly), October 22, 1941, 1.

### Temporary Allies and Comrades: World War II Era Films

During World War II, Hollywood contributed to the war effort by making films that depicted the Soviet Union in a positive way. The Office of War Information (OWI) exercised power by reviewing the screenplays of most of the major movie studios in order to make sure that the films did not contain objectionable material.<sup>27</sup> The goal of the OWI was to insure the release of non-propagandistic fare that would still prove beneficial to the war effort.<sup>28</sup> In 1943, Warner Brothers Studio released *Mission to Moscow* and Sam Goldwyn Studios released *The North Star*. The following year MGM released *Song of Russia*. These wartime films shared common themes, including that Russians and Americans are not incredibly different and that the Russians are honourable and patriotic citizens who are willing to bravely fight the Nazis. Both *The North Star* and *Song of Russia* showcase the courage of Soviet peasants fighting the initial Nazi invasion in June 1941.<sup>29</sup> Made in large part to satisfy President Roosevelt, *Mission to Moscow* is based on the events of Joseph E. Davies's diplomatic mission to Soviet Russia prior to the start of World War II. Sent to Russia by Roosevelt from 1936 to 1938, Davies and his family find that the Russians are generally good people with whom they have a lot in common. Davies also notes the rapidity of developments in Soviet industry and the impressive Red Army training manoeuvres taking place during his sojourn in the USSR. The film also suggests that

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<sup>27</sup> Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, & Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: The Free Press of Macmillan, Inc., 1987), vii.

<sup>28</sup> Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 127-128.

the mass trials represented a justifiable punishment of Trotskyite conspirators with German ties.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to presenting the Russian populace as generally decent, *Mission to Moscow* filmmakers also depicted Joseph Stalin as personable and frank. In the film, Stalin states that he has a great admiration for the United States and FDR but says he fears that the Western policy of appeasement diminishes the possibility for peace. In spite of this, Stalin promises Davies that Russia will stand by France in the event that Germany attacks Czechoslovakia and the French come to the Czechs' aid. Shortly after the conclusion of Davies's mission, Stalin signed the Nonaggression Pact with Hitler. According to the film, Davies initially doubted the usefulness of his diplomatic mission, but when Germany invaded Russia in June 1941, Davies began to tour the country in order to cultivate public support for a US-Soviet wartime alliance.<sup>31</sup>

Though Hollywood put Russians "through the wringer" in order to make them more palatable allies during the Second World War, US and Soviet relations soured in the aftermath of the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> While the war managed to make America and the Soviet Union unlikely allies, the end of the conflict brought forth a new and more intense ideological clash between the two nations. The Yalta Conference in February 1945 set the stage for the ideological conflict that was about

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<sup>30</sup> *Mission to Moscow*, directed by Michael Curtiz (1943; Warner Brothers Archive Collection, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> *Mission to Moscow*.

<sup>32</sup> Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 185.

to emerge.<sup>33</sup> At the conclusion of World War II, cinematic Russia again became an exotic place peopled by beautiful women with a penchant for Western men, hapless pawns, and villainous servants of the state.

### **Intense Cold War Phase I: HUAC Comes to Hollywood (the late 1940s-1962)**

The Cold War had broad implications that spanned from the geo-political to the domestic. While the United States and the Soviet Union established an ideologically bifurcated world order, the culture of the United States shifted as well. Politics and popular culture alike reflected a re-emerging mistrust and fear of Communism. Just as the OWI had the opportunity to vet films during World War II, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) also pressured filmmakers into making films that spoke to the evils of Communism. As a result of HUAC's 1947 invitation to Hollywood from the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, HUAC controlled filmmakers by examining the content of their films and encouraging the production of films with anti-Communist messages. Writers, directors, and actors with questionable affiliations, ideologies, and loyalties found themselves blacklisted.<sup>34</sup>

Motivated by fear or a desire to cooperate, filmmakers in the late 1940s and early 1950s produced a proliferation of films regarding the dangers of domestically based Communists attempting to attack the United States.<sup>35</sup> They also resumed making films about the perceived horrors of the Communist Russian state. Produced

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<sup>33</sup> H.W. Brands, *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-8.

<sup>34</sup> Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 133.

in the spirit of cooperation with HUAC, *The Red Danube* (1949) was typical of the propagandistic fare of the era.

In *The Red Danube*, a group of British officers are sent to post-war Vienna in order to help repatriate displaced Soviet citizens to the Soviet Union. Shortly after the party's arrival, Major John "Twingo" McPhimister (Peter Lawford) begins to pursue a beautiful ballerina who sometimes prays in the chapel at the convent where the British officers are staying. In spite of her initial resistance, Maria Bühlen (Janet Leigh) decides to date Twingo, but dodges questions about her nationality. This is because Maria is really a Russian prima ballerina named Olga Alexandrova who is evading the Russian forces seeking to repatriate her. Colonel Piniev (Louis Calhern) promises that Maria would be received warmly in Moscow, but when Maria surrenders herself to Piniev, she is placed in a displaced person camp reminiscent of a Nazi concentration camp. After the convent's Mother Superior and Twingo rescue Maria from a train back to Russia, she is again pursued by the Russians. Though Twingo's commander Colonel Nicobar (Walter Pidgeon) has adopted the stance that forced repatriation of Russians is wrong, his superior officers favour cooperation with their wartime allies and decide to turn Maria over to Piniev. Desperate and hopeless while waiting for Piniev to arrive, Maria decides to jump out of a window of the Viennese British Army Headquarters to her death rather than return to Russia. Ultimately, Maria's sacrifice is not in vain, the film concludes with Colonel Nicobar

having secured a United Nations declaration stating that displaced persons could no longer be forcefully repatriated.<sup>36</sup>

Maria shares a number of similarities with the female Russian film characters that came before her. Like Ninotchka and Theodore, she is very attractive and susceptible to the advances of a Western man who plans to save her from the Russians by taking her to his native country of Scotland. Like Ninotchka, Maria is considered a credit to the Soviet state because of her occupational talents as a renowned ballerina who brought glory to the USSR. However, unlike Ninotchka, Maria did not leave Soviet Russia feeling conflicted in order to be with the man she loved. A Russian citizen of German descent, Olga Alexandrova left the USSR as a displaced person during World War II and assumed the name of Maria Bühlen while living in Vienna in an attempt to hide from Soviet repatriation forces. Ultimately, Maria chooses death over returning to Soviet Russia. Given the filmmakers' depiction of the brutality of the Soviet state and its representatives, Maria's desperate decision seems justified. Earlier in the film another displaced Russian professor who Nicobar found in the British zone chooses to shoot himself in the head rather than return to Russia.<sup>37</sup>

Colonel Piniev, the Russian officer in charge of locating, gathering, and repatriating displaced Russians in Vienna, is calculating and deceptive. After locating Maria in the convent, Piniev explains that Stalin wants Maria to return to Russia in order to resume her dancing career. He promises that she will be granted amnesty for

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<sup>36</sup> *The Red Danube*, directed by George Sidney (1949; CreateSpace on Amazon Instant Video, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> *The Red Danube*.

failing to return to Russia. Maria does not believe this and argues that millions of Russians “no longer believe what they are told ‘officially’,” but that they are all powerless against the mechanisms of the state. Additionally, the displaced people that the Russians have succeeded in locating in Vienna are sent to dismal detainee camps before they are ushered onto crowded trains bound for Russia. The film also repeatedly references the un-Christian nature of the Russian Communists who have chosen to transport the detainees in the cold and crowded trains back to Russia on Christmas Eve. In contrast, the detainees on the train who have attempted to run from the Communist state begin to sing “Silent Night” together in Russian.<sup>38</sup>

Released in October 1949, *The Red Danube* proved a critical and box office failure. At the end of a generally negative review, the *Variety* staff writer concluded by stating that “[a]pparently, the effective film on Soviet misdeeds is yet to be made” and that *The Red Danube* was “[n]either a thriller nor a sound exposition of the totalitarian threat.”<sup>39</sup> The reviewer for the *New York Times* argued that the film lacked focus, shifting clumsily between the main storyline regarding Maria and the British officers, commentary on Soviet human rights violations, and championing Christianity.<sup>40</sup> The reviewer for *Variety* suggested that the “fairly strong name cast,” which included Peter Lawford and Janet Leigh, would be the only way for the film to overcome its bad reviews and become a commercial success.<sup>41</sup> In spite of a high

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<sup>38</sup> *The Red Danube*.

<sup>39</sup> Wit, “*The Red Danube*,” *Variety* (weekly), September 21, 1949.

<sup>40</sup> T.M.P., “*The Red Danube*,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1949, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Wit, “*The Red Danube*,” 8.

profile cast, the film performed poorly at the box office like many of the other anti-Communist films made in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the tense, anti-Communist political climate in Hollywood, bad box office and lukewarm reviews did not stop filmmakers from making anti-Communist and anti-Soviet films. In late 1949, production began on *Jet Pilot*, yet another film depicting a beautiful Russian woman falling in love with a Western man and defecting from the USSR. In the film, Soviet pilot Lieutenant Anna Marladoyna (Janet Leigh) arrives at American Colonel Jim Shannon's (John Wayne) base in the United States ostensibly in order to defect from the Soviet Union. In spite of this, Anna refuses to reveal information about the Soviet Air Force that may harm her country and Shannon's superiors encourage him to keep close watch over her activities by starting a romantic relationship with her. Jim plies Anna with beautiful clothing, including a "silly" hat that she "adores" in a direct reference to *Ninotchka*, and juicy steaks.<sup>43</sup> In spite of their ideological differences, the two fall in love and are married so that Anna will not be deported back to Russia. Shortly thereafter, Jim finds out that Anna is really a Soviet spy named Olga Orlief. Feeling conflicted, Jim cooperates with his superior officers and pretends to defect to the Soviet Union with his wife in order to collect intelligence on the Soviet Air Force. Jim succeeds in learning about their aviation weaknesses by recording what kind of information they

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<sup>42</sup> "Anti-Red Films Not Very Big in the B.O. Black," *Variety* (weekly), March 29, 1950, 16.

<sup>43</sup> In 1956, Soviet discus thrower Nina Ponomareva earned notoriety after being arrested for stealing hats from a millinery store in London. The British press dubbed the Soviet athlete "Nina of the Five Hats." Perhaps cinematic Soviet women's affinity towards hats was not purely fictional. Stephen Wagg, "'If you want the girl next door...': Olympic sport and the popular press in early Cold War Britain," in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 106-107.



are attempting to learn from him during interrogations, but he notices that he is having short term memory problems. Anna soon learns that her superiors are drugging Jim and that he will be traded back to the Americans in exchange for five Russian POWs after he has been given so large a dose of the drug that it may cause permanent damage to his memory. In order to put a stop to her superiors' plans because she loves Jim, Anna joins him in the air in her own jet while Jim is testing an unstable Soviet prototype and imparts the message that they must return to the United States. She provides cover and shoots down the Soviet jets that attempt to thwart their escape. The film ends with Anna and Jim enjoying a steak dinner in Palm Springs.<sup>44</sup>

Borrowing much from *Ninotchka*, *Jet Pilot* is yet another story of a Soviet Russian woman seduced by the charms of a Western man and the luxurious goods that one can easily obtain in a capitalist society. Like *Ninotchka* and *Maria*, Anna is a credit to the Soviet state through her work. She also begins the story as a convinced Communist, harbouring suspicion about love and religion and spouting rhetoric like *Ninotchka* and *Theodore*. Comparable to *Ninotchka*, Anna ultimately defects from the Soviet Union out of love for a Western man, in spite of some misgivings due to lingering patriotism for a country that has ultimately disappointed her.<sup>45</sup>

In *Jet Pilot*, Anna's male superior officers are the representatives of the Soviet state. They are responsible for Anna's original espionage mission to the United States and for the plans to use their drug to damage Jim's memory. The colonel who gave the order for the final massive dose laughs callously as he tells Anna what is

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<sup>44</sup> *Jet Pilot*, directed by Josef von Sternberg (1957; Universal Studios, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> *Ninotchka*, *Comrade X*, *The Red Danube*, *Jet Pilot*.

slated to happen to the husband he assumes she does not care about. Anna's previous immediate superior officer, Colonel Sokolov, was sent to the uranium mines when Anna relayed to her superiors that he had been asking Jim only about subjects related to Russia's aerial inferiority. However, in order to protect Jim, Anna lied and told her superiors that Jim had not figured this out. While Colonel Sokolov (Roland Winters) was not executed like the rapidly changing Commissars in *Comrade X*, he still suffered a major decline in status and a punishment of hard labor for an indefinite length of time. Anna also makes several references to the practice of state ordered execution.<sup>46</sup>

Released in October 1957 after years of revision, *Jet Pilot* failed to impress the critics.<sup>47</sup> Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* stated that the film was "silly and sorry" fare that should have never been released. Crowther concludes his review by proclaiming the film a "dud."<sup>48</sup> Though critical of Janet Leigh's performance, the *Variety* reviewer was more forgiving of the film, but stated that "[t]he appeal is for those who can sit back and relax, not too much concerned about the grim real-life background (Soviet vs. American maneuvers) from which the story is projected."<sup>49</sup> In

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<sup>46</sup> *Jet Pilot*.

<sup>47</sup> Though the original shooting for *Jet Pilot* took place in only seven weeks, producer Howard Hughes wanted to make substantial revisions to the flying scenes. Hughes also had additional scenes shot with the stars and ordered the film be adjusted for widescreen projection. Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood*, 172.

<sup>48</sup> Bosley Crowther, "Jet Pilot," *New York Times*, October 5, 1957, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Gene, "Jet Pilot," *Variety* (weekly), September 25, 1957, 6.

spite of an unenthusiastic critical reception, the film performed well at the box office most likely due to John Wayne's appeal to audiences.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the production of many formulaic films that hoped to capitalize through varying degrees of mimicry of *Ninotchka*, a team of writers worked with Cole Porter in order to produce a musical adaptation of the film. In February 1955, *Silk Stockings* premiered on Broadway. While a few of the details of the storyline are different and many musical numbers have been added, the overall premise of the remake is largely unchanged. In the 1957 film adaptation of *Silk Stockings*, Ninotchka (Cyd Charisse) is sent to Paris in order to hasten the return of Boroff, a prominent Russian composer, to the Soviet Union after a trio of bumbling Soviet art envoys failed to quickly return with him. American film producer Steven Canfield (Fred Astaire) is striving to keep Boroff in Paris in order to record the soundtrack for his latest film. However, a culturally insensitive musical number set to Boroff's music lead confirms Ninotchka's belief that she and Steven can never overcome the cultural differences between them and she returns to Moscow with the envoys. Shortly thereafter, she is sent back to Paris after news of the recently re-deployed envoys' "decadent behavior" has reached Moscow. When she returns, she finds that the three envoys have defected and opened a restaurant and that Steven made the report about the envoys in order to insure that she would be sent back to

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<sup>50</sup>I have been unable to locate a definitive revenue total for this film. This assertion is based again on box office totals from *Variety*. In the October 2, 1957 issue of *Variety* (weekly), an article about relative performance at the box office proclaims that "'Pilot' Soars to 1<sup>st</sup>" with "uniformly excellent" returns in as many as nineteen key cities across the United States. "National Boxoffice Survey: Biz Perks Slightly; 'Pilot' Soars to 1<sup>st</sup>, '80 Days' 2d, 'Sun' 3d; 'Wonders,' 'Game,' '10 C's' Next," *Variety* (weekly), October 2, 1957, 3.

collect them. Steve proposes to Ninotchka and she tears up her return plane ticket to Moscow with some slight hesitation. Released in July 1957, the film version of *Silk Stockings* opened to positive reviews and equally impressive box office returns.<sup>51</sup>

Also in 1957, the pro-Soviet World War II-era film *The North Star* was edited and rebroadcast to reflect the vehement anti-Soviet sentiments that had flourished since the end of World War II. Historian Stephen J. Whitfield describes the 1957 television transformation of *The North Star* into the decidedly anti-Soviet *Armored Attack*. Reminiscent of *Comrade X*, the edited film features a newly added prologue apologizing for any pro-Soviet sentiments that censors had failed to excise from the film and a newly constructed ending composed of actual footage of Russian tanks brutally suppressing the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.<sup>52</sup>

From the late 1940s through the early 1960s, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union remained tense. In addition to the long-standing ideological conflict, new concerns stemmed from the development of atomic weaponry. Though Stalin's death and the end of the Korean War signaled a temporary improvement in American and Soviet relations, the intensity of the Cold War did not truly diminish until after the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.<sup>53</sup> The first thaw of the Cold War that blossomed into the policy of détente in the 1970s signified a

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<sup>51</sup> *Silk Stockings*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian (1957; Warner Home Video, 2003); "Behind the Scenes" DVD special feature, *Silk Stockings*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian (1957; Warner Home Video, 2003). Tony Shaw argues that it is significant that the nationality of the Western suitor changes from European to American. In *Silk Stockings*, Steven Canfield, an American movie producer played by Fred Astaire succeeds in seducing Ninotchka. Tony Shaw argues that the shift Americanizes Ninotchka's acquired affinity for Western culture. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Boyer, *by the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 355.

temporary, elective stalemate between the United States and the Soviet Union. While Hollywood continued to churn out films about Russians, particularly Russian spies, the most popular films featuring Russians during this time period generally offered relatively benign portrayals of Russian men and women.<sup>54</sup>

### **The First Cold War Thaw: Post-Cuban Missile Crisis and Détente (1962-1979)**

*From Russia with Love*, the second film in the Anglo-American James Bond franchise, featured the debonair British agent in pursuit of a Russian encryption device known as a Lektor. In this film, Bond (Sean Connery) intercepts and seduces the beautiful Soviet agent sent by SPECTRE, an international association dedicated to evil, in order to acquire the Lektor. British Bond and Russian Tatiana Romanova (Daniela Bianchi) quickly unite forces due to strong mutual attraction, though initially somewhat marred by a sense of mistrust, in order to keep SPECTRE from obtaining the Lektor. Bond and Tatiana ultimately succeed in this endeavor, learn to trust one another, and work together in order to kill the androgynous Russian SPECTRE agent, Colonel Rosa Klebb (Lotte Leyna).<sup>55</sup>

Though Klebb differs significantly from the prototypical cinematic Russian woman, Tatiana fits the profile perfectly. She is a beautiful ballerina turned Soviet operative. Unaware that she is really working for SPECTRE, Tatiana begins her

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<sup>54</sup> Strada and Troper, *Friend or Foe*, 139. Though I am not going to analyze *Dr. Zhivago* due to the area of focus of this study, this film prominently features several highly likeable and relatable characters as well as harsh representatives of the Soviet state attempting to enforce the newly instated regulations through armed force and strict monitoring. This film also performed remarkably well at the box office. *Dr. Strangelove*, another highly successful film made during the first Cold War thaw, satirized the threat of nuclear war. While the film is about an American missile accidentally triggering a Soviet doomsday device, most of the characters in this film exhibit outlandish behavior regardless of nationality. The uniformly eccentric behavior of the film's characters renders an analysis of *Dr. Strangelove* of limited usefulness in this paper.

<sup>55</sup> *From Russia with Love*, directed by Terence Young (1963; MGM, 2007).

mission under the assumption that she is performing a service for her country. Told by Klebb that a failure of her mission will result in her execution, Tatiana accepts her responsibility valiantly but finds herself immediately overcome by Bond's charms. In contrast, Klebb proves immune to Bond's magnetism. Though Russian and a former agent for the Russian counter-intelligence agency known as SMERSH, Klebb does not represent Russia. She is instead a representative of an international crime syndicate, free from Cold War motivations and allegiances. She does not fit the stereotypical cinematic ideal of Soviet womanhood, but her loyalties lie with SPECTRE rather than the Soviet Union and thus she cannot be considered a representative of the Soviet state.<sup>56</sup>

Released in the United States in May 1964, the critics generally found *From Russia with Love* enjoyable but unrealistic.<sup>57</sup> The *Variety* reviewer deemed it "topnotch escapism," while Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* referred to it as a "pseudo-realistic fantasy."<sup>58</sup> The *Time* magazine reviewer noted that the film lacked sophistication, but that it was "fast, smart, shrewdly directed and capably performed."<sup>59</sup> The box office grosses in the United States and abroad revealed that film audiences embraced the spy-thriller in spite of its perceived shortcomings. The

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<sup>56</sup> *From Russia with Love*.

<sup>57</sup> Though subject to wide-release in the United States on May 27, 1964, the film had its London premiere October 10, 1963. "Release dates," *From Russia with Love*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/releaseinfo> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Rich, "From Russia with Love," *Variety* (weekly), October 16, 1963, 6. Bosley Crowther, "From Russia with Love: James Bond Travels the Orient Express," *New York Times*, April 9, 1964, 25.

<sup>59</sup> "Cinema: Once More Unto the Breach," *Time*, April 10, 1964, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,875772,00.html> (accessed May 29, 2011).

film grossed nearly \$25 million in the United States and almost \$79 million worldwide.<sup>60</sup>

The May 1966 release of *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* marked yet another highly successful, positive film regarding Russians. In this satirical comedy, a submarine crew is searching a New England island town for a boat with enough power to pull their beached submarine back into the ocean. In spite of the crew's lack of malice, many of the townspeople misinterpret the sailors' search as a Russian invasion and attempt to round up a militia and call in the US Air Force in order to stop the perceived invasion. During a standoff between the armed townspeople and the Russian submarine crew waiting for the safe return of all the sailors, the Russians prove their humanity by helping to rescue a young boy who fell from the church's rooftop and became suspended from the steeple by his belt. After this display, most of the townspeople realize that the Russian sailors have meant no harm and they form a convoy of small boat to help the Russian submarine to successfully escape without drawing fire from the Air Force jets.<sup>61</sup>

While the majority of the nine Russian sailors inadvertently wreaking havoc on Gloucester Island in the course of their search could not speak English, the two that could left a largely favorable impression. Lieutenant Rozanov (Alan Arkin) and a young sailor named Alexei Kolchin (John Philip Law) predominantly interact with the Whittaker family and the family's babysitter. Though Rozanov originally holds

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<sup>60</sup> "Box office/ business," *From Russia with Love*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057076/business> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>61</sup> *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming*, directed by Norman Jewison (1966; MGM, 2002).

the family at gunpoint while asking for information about the military and police force on the island and demanding the key to the family car, it soon becomes abundantly clear that the Russians are scared, confused, and earnestly attempting to quickly leave the island without harming anyone or attracting military attention. In the course of Alexei's guard duty over the Whittaker family, he and the family's babysitter, Allison Palmer, develop a mutual attraction. Alexei confesses to Allison that he has been taught to mistrust Americans, but that he doesn't. Alexei proclaims: "I wish not to hate anybody!" and Allison agrees on the futility of blind hatred. In spite of all the miscommunication and moments of potential danger, the Whittaker family and Allison endeavor to help the Russians because they have met a few of their Cold War enemies face to face and found that they are good-natured, lacking malice, and thoroughly human.<sup>62</sup>

*The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* received a resoundingly favorable response from critics. Robert Alden of the *New York Times* credits the film for teaching tolerance through comedy rather than preaching.<sup>63</sup> The reviewer for *Variety* calls the film "an outstanding cold-war comedy," praised the acting performances, and correctly predicting that the film would do well at the box office.<sup>64</sup> In addition to finding favor with the critics and audiences, politicians greatly approved of the film's political statement about the futility of international warfare

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<sup>62</sup> *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming*.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Alden, "Screen: 'The Russians Are Coming': Broad Farce Arrives at Three Theaters," *New York Times*, May 26, 1966, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Murf, "The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming," *Variety* (weekly), May 25, 1966, 7. According to the Box Office Report Database, the film made just under \$10 million domestically and placed seventh for the top grossing films of 1966. "Top 20 Films of 1966 by Domestic Revenues," *Box Office Report*, <http://www.boxofficereport.com/database/1966.shtml> (accessed May 29, 2011).



when it was screened in Washington and Moscow.<sup>65</sup> The film also garnered four Oscar nominations, including one for Best Picture and one for Best Actor for Alan Arkin.<sup>66</sup>

In a détente-era entry from the Bond franchise, *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), the British Secret Service and the Soviet KGB have decided to put aside their ideological differences in order to work together to thwart a villainous shipping tycoon's designs for nuclear war. James Bond (Roger Moore) and Anya Amasova (Barbara Bach) embark on a mission to locate the missing British and Russian submarines as rivals and then unite as allies at the behest of their superiors. In spite of the apparent cooperation between the British Secret Service and the KGB, the tension bubbles beneath the surface. Anya, known as XXX, has vowed to exact revenge on Bond once the mission is complete after learning that Bond killed her lover while on a mission in Austria. Following Karl Stromberg's (Curd Jürgens) successful capture of Anya, Bond single-handedly manages to foil Stromberg's plan to start a highly destructive nuclear war and subsequently rule over an underwater civilization known as Atlantis. After saving the world from nuclear destruction, Bond returns to Atlantis, kills Stromberg, frees Anya, and the two of them escape. In the escape pod, Anya decides she has forgiven Bond and the two of them engage in sexual activity.<sup>67</sup>

Like most of her predecessors, Anya is very attractive and dedicated to the Soviet state. She is a highly skilled and resourceful KGB agent. Indeed, Anya appears

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<sup>65</sup> *The Russians Are Coming to Hollywood*, directed by Greg Carson, Special Feature on *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* DVD (2002; MGM, 2002).

<sup>66</sup> "Awards for," *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060921/awards> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> *The Spy Who Loved Me*, directed by Lewis Gilbert (1977; MGM, 2007).

to be Bond's equal in many respects, though her inferiority is reaffirmed by her need for Bond to rescue her from Stromberg's clutches. Though Anya's allegiance to the Soviet Union is not tested in the course of the plot, Bond manages to quell her personal animosity toward him by saving her from Stromberg. Arguably, the atmosphere created by détente allows Anya to develop romantic feelings for Bond without having to renounce her own country to act on them. If the USSR and Britain could form a temporary on-screen alliance allowing the KGB and the British Secret Service to cooperate in order to avert a nuclear war, then a pretty Soviet agent could submit to a Western man without defecting from the Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup>

Critics found the tenth entry in the Bond series a bit tedious. Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* suggests that the film is overly long and almost a parody of the earlier Bond films. She also argues that Barbara Bach's performance as Anya hardly convinces viewers that she is a "master spy who is almost (but not quite) as ingenious as 007 himself."<sup>69</sup> The *Variety* reviewer predicted the commercial success of the film, but agreed that the film was highly formulaic with "Anglo-Soviet détente [as] the one novel story point in the pic."<sup>70</sup> Christopher Porterfield of *Time* magazine also found that it was "[h]ard to believe [Bach] as a dangerous spy" and argued that the film peaked at Bond's evasive ski jump stunt that preceded the opening credits.<sup>71</sup> In spite

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<sup>68</sup> *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

<sup>69</sup> Janet Maslin, "The Spy Who Loved Me: 'Spy Who Loved' a Bit Long on Bond," *New York Times*, July 28, 1977, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Pit, "The Spy Who Loved Me," *Variety* (weekly), July 6, 1977, 17.

<sup>71</sup> Christopher Porterfield, "Cinema: Giggles, Wiggle, Bubbles, and Bond," *Time*, August 8, 1977, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915224,00.html> (accessed May 29, 2011).

of these criticisms, the film grossed \$46.8 million in the US alone and \$185.4 million worldwide.<sup>72</sup>

In the late 1970s, détente ended and the early 1980s marked the renewal of Cold War tensions between the East and the West. The fall of the Shah's government in Iran and the subsequent hostage crisis signalled a substantial shift in the Western imposed power balance in the Middle East. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent American boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow signified the rapid rising of hostilities between the United States and the USSR. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 further indicated the desire of Americans to abandon the principles of détente and the sentiments it fostered.<sup>73</sup> In light of these developments, some of the most lucrative films of the early to mid-1980s featured cinematic Russians at their worst.

#### **Intense Cold War Phase II: The Demise of Détente and the Rise of Reagan (early to mid-1980s)**

Some films of the early to mid-1980s continued to offer relatively balanced depictions of Russians. Among these are *Gorky Park* (1983), *Moscow on the Hudson* (1984), and *White Nights* (1985). All three of these films have Russian male protagonists facing repression from the re-vilified Soviet state. These films also

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<sup>72</sup> "Box office/business for," *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0076752/business> (May 29, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed analysis of late Cold War events, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 288-363. Westad focuses on the events in Iran and Afghanistan in chapter eight and discusses "the Regan offensive" of the early 1980s in chapter nine.

contain stereotypical cinematic Russia women hoping to leave the Soviet Union for the United States and craving Western consumer goods.

In *Gorky Park*, Arkady Renko (William Hurt) is an honest Moscow detective fighting for justice for three brutally murdered people in the face of greed, corruption, and violence. Though Jack Osborne (Lee Marvin), an American sable trader, helmed the murderous conspiracy with the goal of smuggling live sables from the country, Moscow's Chief Prosecutor and the KGB are working in concert with the villainous fur magnate. In the course of the investigation, Renko meets Irina Asanova (Joanna Pacula), an attractive Russian woman so desperate to leave the Soviet Union that she became involved in Osborne's sable smuggling ring. Though Renko and Irina romantic feelings for one another, she is reluctant to sever her ties with Osborne because he has promised to secure her entry into the United States in exchange for her assistance in smuggling the sables. However, Osborne has no intention of honoring his promise to Irina and would rather kill her and Renko in a final standoff and then escape to America alone. After Renko and Irina have killed Osborne, Irina is allowed to board a flight to the United States due to a deal that Renko arranged with state officials in Moscow. Though Irina appears conflicted about leaving Renko and promises to return, he tells her that she must go for the sake of her happiness and that he cannot go with her because he could never be anything other than "a Russian."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Gorky Park*, directed by Michael Apted (1983; MGM, 2000). *Gorky Park* was the forty-seventh highest grossing film in the United States in 1983, with a domestic gross of over \$15.8 million. "1983 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1983&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). *Gorky Park* garnered lukewarm reviews from *Variety* and the *New York Times*. The critics agreed that the actors

In *Moscow on the Hudson*, Vladimir Ivanoff (Robin Williams) defects in New York City's Bloomingdales department store while touring as a saxophonist with the Russian Circus in order to experience the freedoms of life in America. Prior to his impromptu defection, Vladimir was shopping for the American designer jeans that his Russian girlfriend had asked him to bring back for her. In America, Vladimir finds friends, a thriving consumer culture where he will never again have to stand in a massive line for toilet paper or shoes, and artistic freedom to play jazz.<sup>75</sup>

In *White Nights*, Nikolai Rodchenko (Mikhail Baryshnikov) is a Russian expatriate ballet dancer who is involuntarily returned to his native Russia following an emergency plane landing at a Siberian base. The KGB has seized upon Nikolai's arrival with the ambition of engineering his return to the stage and assign Raymond Greenwood (Gregory Hines), an African-American tap dancer who defected to the Soviet Union, to spy on Nikolai. In spite of this, Nikolai is determined to leave the

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gave good performances, but the plot was very convoluted. Har., "Gorky Park," *Variety* (weekly), December 14, 1983, 16. Janet Maslin, "Gorky Park," *New York Times*, December 16, 1983, C6.

<sup>75</sup> *Moscow on the Hudson*, directed by Paul Marzursky (1984; Sony Pictures, 2001). *Moscow on the Hudson* was the forty-second highest grossing film in the United States in 1984, with a domestic gross of just over \$25 million. "1984 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1984&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* and the *Variety* reviewer both praised the acting in *Moscow on the Hudson*, but neither was overly enthused about the entirety of the film. Canby argued that the consumerism-centered comedic jabs at the Soviet Union in the beginning of the film felt highly dated, reminding him of *Ninotchka* or *Comrade X*, while the Vladimir's potentially frustrating encounters with American bureaucracy were left completely unexamined. While humor about Russians' desires for consumer goods lacked novelty by the 1980s, historians examining the collapse of the GDR and the Soviet Union have surmised that the desire for Western consumer goods played a role in the downfall of these communist states. For information on this subject see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Know Now: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) and Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and The End of East Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). The *Variety* reviewer correctly predicted that the "patriotic" and awkwardly titled film would not draw large audiences. Vincent Canby, "Moscow on the Hudson," *New York Times*, April 6, 1984, C12. Har., "Moscow on the Hudson," *Variety* (weekly), March 28, 1984, 22.

artistically repressive Soviet Russian state once more. Nikokai succeeds in his escape with the help of his former girlfriend and the American consulate. The consulate also helps Raymond to repatriate to the United States with Darya (Isabella Rossellini), his pregnant Russian wife in order to escape the prejudice they faced in the Soviet Union and to insure a better life for their child.<sup>76</sup>

While *Gorky Park*, *Moscow on the Hudson*, and *White Nights* offered portrayals of decent Russian men fighting the repressive conventions of the Soviet Russian state, a number of filmmakers instead chose to portray a highly aggressive and bellicose Soviet Russian state. Filmmakers made these two types of films concurrently, but the difference in genres seemed to be key to the degree to which filmmakers represented Russian men as villains. The action films tended to be more bombastic and inflammatory and less concerned with balanced portrayals of any Soviet Russians. Though both types of films contained Russian antagonists, the ones in the action films tended to be more bloodthirsty and one-dimensional. Additionally, these films did not prominently feature Russian female characters. While the more

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<sup>76</sup> *White Nights*, directed by Taylor Hackford (1985; Sony Pictures, 2006). *White Nights* was the seventeenth highest grossing film in the United States in 1985, with a domestic gross of over \$42.1 million. "1985 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1985&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* found the plot of *White Nights* dated and unrealistic, but appreciated Baryshnikov's screen presence and talents as a dancer. Vincent Canby, "White Nights," *New York Times*, November 22, 1985, C10. Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* found the film's plot incredibly "tortuous," but found the film's dance sequences highly enjoyable. Roger Ebert, "White Nights," *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 22, 1985, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19851122/REVIEWS/511220302/1023> (accessed May 29, 2011). The *Variety* reviewer predicted a decent box office outlook for *White Nights*, but found the filmmakers' aims confused and the characters largely unsympathetic. Cart., "White Nights," *Variety* (weekly), November 6, 1985, 26-28. Additionally, this film exploits the decline of Soviet anti-racism in the 1980s. The turbulence of the 1980s in the USSR led to a surge in racially motivated conflict. For more information on this see: Maxim Matusevich, "Black in the U.S.S.R.," *Transition* no. 100 (2008): 56-75.

moderate films included the tropes of Russian women hoping to leave Soviet Russia for the United States and craving American consumer goods, the action films featured even fewer Russian women. Aside from one notable exception, the villainous Russians from the action movies of the early to mid-1980s were men.

The plot of *Firefox* (1982) featured Major Mitchell Gant (Clint Eastwood), an American Vietnam veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, overcoming his anxieties in order to steal a Firefox Jet from the Soviet Air Force. With support from the CIA's Russian contacts, who have been marginalized from the rest of Soviet society because of their political and religious beliefs, Gant manages to stay one step ahead of the murderous KGB agents, secure the superior Soviet jet, and make a harrowing escape. During the course of his escape, Gant shoots down the second Firefox prototype that is pursuing him, rendering the one that he has claimed for the West as the only one left in the world.<sup>77</sup>

Films like *Red Dawn* (1984) and *Invasion U.S.A.* (1985) sought to capitalize on the premise of the Cold War suddenly becoming a direct conflict between the USSR and the United States. The plot of *Red Dawn* concerns a joint invasion of the mid-western United States by the Soviets, Cubans, and Nicaraguans in the context of World War III. Though the Soviets and Cubans are ostensibly allies, drawn together

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<sup>77</sup> *Firefox*, directed by Clint Eastwood (1982; Warner Home Video, 2002). *Firefox* was the fifteenth highest grossing film in the United States in 1982, with a domestic gross of approximately \$46.7 million. "1982 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1982&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). The *Variety* reviewer described *Firefox* as "[l]ethargic, characterless," and overly long. Cart., "Firefox," *Variety* (weekly), June 16, 1982, 14. Vincent Canby's review in the *New York Times* was not as scathing, but Canby argues that the film lacks action, suspense, and plausibility. Vincent Canby, "Firefox," *New York Times*, June 18, 1982, C16.

by their shared Communist ideology, a clear distinction is drawn between the Russian and Cuban officers. Near the end of the film, the Cuban leader, Colonel Bella (Ron O'Neal), who has doubted the Russians' revolutionary fervor for some time, is shown tendering his resignation. Soon after, he allows Jed Eckert (Patrick Swayze), the leader of the Wolverines, a guerrilla band comprised of young adults, to assist his mortally wounded brother to temporary safety. Though the Eckert brothers have managed to kill the Russian commanding officers, Major General Bratchenko and Major Strelnikov, Bella does not pursue the boys, but instead tells Jed "Vaya con Dios (Go with God)," as they pass by. In contrast to Bella's honorable gesture, the Russians seem to have lost sight of their revolutionary ideals. Failing to win the hearts and minds of the people through "re-education camps" or book burnings, they instead choose to obliterate any opposition that challenges their newly established rule.<sup>78</sup>

The less successful *Invasion U.S.A.* (1985) also depicted an attempted invasion of the United States led by Russian terrorist, Mikhail Rostov (Richard Lynch). Former CIA agent Matt Hunter (Chuck Norris) reluctantly comes out of retirement in order to foil his old nemesis and stop the Christmastime invasion in which civilians, including children, are the prime target. Hunter ultimately kills

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<sup>78</sup> *Red Dawn*, directed by John Milius (1984; MGM, 2007). *Red Dawn* was the twentieth highest grossing film in the United States in 1984, with a domestic gross of nearly \$38.4 million. "1984 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1984&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* found the film highly unrealistic and "incorrigibly gung-ho," robbing the film of the potential to be "a genuinely stirring war film." Janet Maslin, "Red Dawn," *New York Times*, August 10, 1984, 11. The *Variety* reviewer argued that the film had potential in spite of laughable dialogue, but that the moralistic tone and conclusion of the film rendered it highly dissatisfying. Har., "Red Dawn," *Variety* (weekly), August 8, 1984, 14.



Rostov during a standoff in the newly constructed American Command Center in Atlanta, Georgia and Rostov's forces subsequently surrender to the National Guard thereby ending the invasion.<sup>79</sup>

While *Firefox*, *Red Dawn*, and *Invasion U.S.A.* all contain violent, one-dimensional Russians juxtaposed with heroic, patriotic Americans, *Rocky IV* arguably provides the most exaggerated example of this model. In *Rocky IV*, Soviet boxing sensation Ivan Drago (Dolph Lundgren) and his handlers want the opportunity for Drago to prove his prowess in the ring by taking on Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) in an exhibition match in Las Vegas. Rocky refuses to come out of retirement in order to fight Drago, but his friend and former boxing rival Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers) decides to take the challenge instead. During the second round of the match, Drago kills Creed without any compunction and reasserts his desire to take on "the real champion."<sup>80</sup>

Rocky decides that he must fight Drago in order to avenge Creed and begins to prepare for a match scheduled to take place on Christmas Day in Russia. Training in Siberia without the benefit of any specialized equipment, Rocky readies himself for the match solely through hard work and his trademark creative training exercises. In

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<sup>79</sup> *Invasion U.S.A.*, directed by Joseph Zito (1985; MGM, 2001). *Invasion U.S.A.* was the fiftieth highest grossing film in the United States in 1985, grossing over \$17.5 million domestically. "1985 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1985&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). Both Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* and Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* panned *Invasion U.S.A.* Both critics agreed that the storyline was unrealistic and that Chuck Norris's performance was dismal. Canby wrote that the "goofiness" of the film was enough "to make one long for the sanity and conviction of John Milius's *Red Dawn*." Vincent Canby, "Invasion U.S.A.," *New York Times*, September 27, 1985, C6. Roger Ebert, "Invasion U.S.A.," *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 27, 1985, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19850927/REVIEWS/509270301/1023> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> *Rocky IV*, directed by Sylvester Stallone (1985; MGM, 2005).

contrast, Drago prepares for the match by receiving injections of steroids and by working out in a gym with telemetry capable of generating vast quantities of data on his performance. Ever the underdog, Rocky begins the fight looking out-matched and taking an inordinate amount of punches, but he manages to persevere and change the course of the match. When it is apparent that Rocky is poised to win the fight, the Soviet people in the audience begin to cheer for Rocky and a member of the Politburo comes down to the ring and instructs Drago to win for the prestige of the USSR. Drago responds by picking the man up by the throat, only dropping him when Drago's wife demands that he do so. Though Drago wants desperately to win in order to prove his own superiority to Rocky, Rocky ultimately prevails to the delight of crowd. Basking in the admiration of the previously hostile crowd, Rocky makes the following statement: "If I can change and you can change, everybody can change." In response, the entire crowd, including the Soviet Premier and the members of the Politburo give the Italian Stallion a standing ovation.<sup>81</sup>

Like many of his cinematic countrymen and women, Captain Ivan Drago served in the Russian military and is a physically remarkable specimen. At six feet and five inches tall, weighing 261 pounds, Drago could throw a punch with over a ton of pressure behind it due to his rigorous training and apparent anabolic steroid usage. This square-jawed "mountain of muscle from the Soviet Union" delivered few lines in the course of the film, allowing his handlers and his wife to speak on his behalf. Drago's few lines help to solidify his villainy. After killing Creed in the ring, Drago

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<sup>81</sup> *Rocky IV*.

responds by reiterating his desire to fight Rocky and dismisses the obvious concern over Creed, indifferently stating “If he dies, he dies.” In addition to revealing himself as a cold-blooded killer, Drago’s words also reveal that he wants to win his fight against Rocky for himself. Unlike Creed and Rocky, Drago apparently lacks patriotic motives in taking on an American opponent. While Rocky has stepped into Creed’s place in order to avenge his friend by helping to debunk the myth that Russians are unequivocally the world’s best athletes, Drago is only in the ring to win for his own edification.<sup>82</sup>

Drago’s wife, Ludmilla (Brigitte Nielsen), is the sole representative of Soviet feminine villainy in these early to mid-1980s action films. Like the majority of cinematic Soviet women who came before her, Ludmilla is beautiful and talented. As an Olympic swimmer, she is a credit to the Soviet state. However, in contrast to other female Russian film characters, Ludmilla Drago is cold and harsh and remains so through the course of the film. Though she is angered by her husband’s defeat, she also seems unmoved by Rocky’s victory.<sup>83</sup>

While Drago is the epitome of degenerate cinematic Russian masculinity, the Russian people and the Soviet Russian state are far less demonized. Though the Russians monitor Rocky and do not provide him with any special equipment while he prepares in Siberia for his fight with Drago, they do not pose a threat or attempt to sabotage him in any way. Additionally, the Russian spectators desert Drago and begin to cheer for Rocky when it is apparent that the consummate all-American underdog

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<sup>82</sup> *Rocky IV*.

<sup>83</sup> *Rocky IV*.

has prevailed. Even the Premier and the members of the Politburo cannot help but cheer when Rocky simplistically heralds the possibility of changing sentiments that could help to bring about the end of the Cold War. Indeed, the entire Russian populace has been feminized and seduced by an American man.<sup>84</sup>

Released in November 1985, *Rocky IV* had the third highest domestic gross of the year, taking in over \$127.8 million in the United States alone and over \$300 million worldwide.<sup>85</sup> Though the critics at the *New York Times* and *Variety* both predicted that the film would generate great box office, they also both agreed that the film lacked originality and was easily the worst film in the series.<sup>86</sup> Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun Times* also found the film trite and anathema to the spirit of the charter film in the *Rocky* series. Ebert additionally stated that “Drago makes more of a James Bond villain than a Rocky-style character. He is tall, blond, taciturn, and hateful.” Ebert also criticized the Soviet crowd’s change of heart at the end of the film as “not believable.”<sup>87</sup>

While the film’s conclusion is incredibly contrived and unrealistic, Rocky’s optimism about the possibility of change proved rather timely. Meeting at the Geneva summit the very same month that *Rocky IV* was released, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan began a series of meetings that

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<sup>84</sup> *Rocky IV*.

<sup>85</sup> “1985 Domestic Grosses,” *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1985&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011).

“Box office/business for,” *Rocky IV*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0089927/business> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>86</sup> Har., “*Rocky IV*,” *Variety* (weekly), November 27, 1985, 15. Janet Maslin, “*Rocky IV*,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1985, C18.

<sup>87</sup> Roger Ebert, “*Rocky IV*,” *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 27, 1985, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19851127/REVIEWS/511270301/1023> (accessed May 29, 2011).

continued throughout the mid-1980s. During this time, Gorbachev introduced the domestic policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). Though Reagan and Gorbachev frequently disagreed about the proper course of nuclear disarmament in order to secure lasting peace, the lines of communication between the United States and the Soviet Union were finally open and Western films again reflected these changes.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Second Cold War Thaw: Perestroika, Glasnost, and Improved Relations (the mid to late-1980s)**

During the second Cold War thaw, films about Soviet Russia and Russians again took on the more positive approach seen during the first thaw that lasted from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. In the late 1980s, Americans stopped seeing the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” and began to see the USSR as a potential partner in bringing about nuclear arms reduction and eventually ending the Cold War.<sup>89</sup> These changes again translated into shifts in the cinematic treatment of Russian men. These films had varying degrees of success at the box office. *Russkies* (1987), a movie that featured the familiar premise of a Russian sailor washing up on American shores and subsequently befriending a group of American boys who initially regard him as a dangerous Russian foe, failed utterly at the box office.<sup>90</sup> *Little Nikita* (1988), a film

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<sup>88</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 229-236.

<sup>89</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 224-225.

<sup>90</sup> *Russkies*, directed by Rick Rosenthal (1987; Internet Movie Database, 2011). *Russkies* grossed just under \$2.2 million domestically. It made 147<sup>th</sup> highest gross in 1987. “*Russkies*,” *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=russkies.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011).

about a seemingly all-American boy finding out that his parents are Russian sleeper agents, had an equally dismal box office performance and garnered harsh reviews.<sup>91</sup>

A more successful film, *Red Heat* (1988), was also representative of the changes in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Spanning across several genres, including action, drama, and the buddy-cop comedy, this Walter Hill directed film featured a Russian protagonist and the first footage in a major American film shot in Moscow, albeit without the consent of the Soviet government.<sup>92</sup>

The Russian protagonist was Captain Ivan Danko (Arnold Schwarzenegger), a Moscow police officer referred to by his fellow officers as “Iron Jaw.” In the film, Viktor “Rosta” Rostavili (Ed O’Ross), a Soviet Georgian drug dealer with an

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<sup>91</sup> *Little Nikita*, directed by Richard Benjamin (1988; Sony Pictures, 2002). *Little Nikita* grossed over \$1.7 million domestically. It made the 160<sup>th</sup> highest gross of 1988. “*Little Nikita*,” *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=littlenikita.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). Walter Goodman of the *New York Times* described many of the elements of the storyline nonsensical and the dialogue trite. Walter Goodman, “*Little Nikita*,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1988, C26. Additionally, Roger Ebert argues that the plot was extremely contrived and stated that “[b]ecause ‘*Little Nikita*’ is impossible to believe, impossible even to accept as a plausible fantasy, it is impossible to care about.” Roger Ebert, “*Little Nikita*,” *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 18, 1988, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19880318/REVIEWS/803180303/1023> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>92</sup> Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood*, 247. In a television special aired in 1988 entitled *Making of Red Heat*, the narrator enthusiastically makes the claim that “it is in the spirit of *glasnost* that the Soviets allowed the filmmakers to shoot in Moscow.” *Making of Red Heat*, Tri-Star, Inc., Special Feature on *Red Heat* DVD (1988; Lions Gate, 2004). However, in *East Meets West*, a short documentary included as a special feature on the 2004 DVD release of *Red Heat*, the film’s executive producer, Andrew Vajna, admits that the filmmakers shot footage in Red Square contrary to the wishes of the Russian government, which had denied the filmmakers permission to shoot in Russia several times. After shooting most of the scenes that were set in Russia in Hungary, only Arnold Schwarzenegger, his make-up person, Walter Hill, the cinematographer, and Vajna continued on to Moscow with minimal equipment in order to shoot scenes featuring Schwarzenegger in Red Square. The shoot lasted three days and attracted some attention from predominantly young fans that recognized Schwarzenegger as a film star, but otherwise remained a low-profile event. Given Vajna’s recent admission, the spirit of *glasnost* may not have technically allowed them to shoot in Moscow, but it allowed them to do so without fear of serious consequence or fear of reprisal. *East Meets West: Red Heat and the Kings of Carolco*, directed by Jeffrey Schwarz, Special Feature on *Red Heat* DVD (2004; Lions Gate, 2004).

extensive rap sheet, kills Danko's partner and flees to the United States. While in Chicago, Viktor is held and arrested on a minor offense. Danko's superiors have information that Viktor was attempting to set up a \$5 million dollar cocaine deal with a Chicago gang known as the Cleanheads. They subsequently dispatch Danko to the United States in order to collect Viktor without having to disclose the recent growth of the Russian drug trade to American law enforcement. Upon his arrival at the airport, Danko is reluctantly met by Detective Sergeant Art Ridzik (James Belushi). The next day, the American authorities release Viktor into Danko's custody. Brought to the airport by Ridzik and his partner, Danko and Viktor are about to board their flight back to Russia when members of the Cleanheads emerge, helping Viktor to escape, giving Danko a concussion, and fatally shooting Ridzik's partner. Though the Russian Consul and his liaison officer attempt to send Danko back to Moscow in disgrace immediately after Viktor has escaped, Danko does not listen to his superiors. Danko instead teams up with Ridzik, relentlessly pursues Viktor, and shoots him following a dramatic bus chase sequence around Chicago. When it is time for Danko to return to Moscow, he and Ridzik amicably part ways having found that they are more similar than they ever would have believed prior to their impromptu pairing.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Red Heat*, directed by Walter Hill (1988; Lions Gate, 2004). Prior to the hyper-masculine 1980s, filmmakers could have just as easily chosen to make Schwarzenegger's role a female one. However, the masculine sensibilities that pervaded the era combined with the reemerging thaw related sentiment that a visiting Russian did not have to be seduced by American society resulted in buddy-cop film in which both detectives are completely engrossed in their careers. If the role of Detective Danko had been written for a female, she would have undoubtedly fallen for Detective Ridzik in the course of the investigation and Ridzik would have probably had to save her from Viktor at some point during the pursuit. Choosing to make the role of Danko a man insured that the plot would not be complicated by romance and that Danko would return willingly to the Soviet Union. Indeed, Tony Shaw compares and contrasts Ivan Danko of *Red Heat* and the title character of *Ninotchka* through his discussion of *Red Heat*. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War*, 286-291.

Though rather straitlaced and extremely focused on his pursuit of Viktor, Danko is an undoubtedly affable character designed to evoke a positive response from the typical American audience. He has a phenomenal work ethic and displays resourcefulness in getting his Soviet firearm past American airport security, tracking down Viktor, and evading his own superiors who want him to return to the Soviet Union. The film's writers also succeed in creating sympathy for Danko through a conversation he has with Ridzik late one night in a diner in which he reveals that he is virtually alone in the world. As Ridzik asks about Danko's family, Danko reveals that he has no significant other or siblings, his father has been dead eleven years, his mother died when he was young, and his grandparents were killed by the Nazis.<sup>94</sup>

Danko's humor must also be factored into the quotient of his affability. In sharp contrast to his wisecracking temporary American partner, Danko's remarks are often humorous due to his deadpan delivery. Another source of humor stems from Danko's apparent lack of familiarity with figurative uses of speech in the English language. While explaining the concept of Miranda Rights to Danko, Ridzik tells him "that you can't even touch [a suspect's] ass." Danko responds by saying: "I don't want to touch his ass. I want to make him talk."<sup>95</sup>

Though generally portrayed in a highly positive manner, Danko seems capable of unlimited violence in his pursuit of Viktor. Among the first scenes in the film is a brutal fistfight in the snow after Danko has been discovered infiltrating a steam-room for foundry workers in pursuit of a tip regarding Viktor's location. As

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<sup>94</sup> *Red Heat*.

<sup>95</sup> *Red Heat*.



Danko and his opponent, both scantily clad from their trip to the steam-room, struggle in the snow, the audience quickly becomes acquainted with Danko's impressive physique and pugilistic abilities. Though Ridzik quickly explains to Danko that in the United States he cannot use violence on suspects to make them talk due to the Miranda Act, Danko continues to routinely resort to violence to solve his problems, breaking an uncooperative informant's fingers and punching a man in order to continue to use his parking spot without having to pay him for it. Danko also fatally shoots numerous men, apparently without compunction, prior to finally tracking down Viktor and shooting him multiple times.<sup>96</sup>

In spite of Danko's ability to take human life without flinching, a goal of this film is to show the similarities between police officers, and by proxy people and systems of power, in two seemingly quite different countries. While Ridzik has less of a violent approach to his work, he is not above questionable tactics when attempting to motivate an informant to cooperate. Before Danko breaks the uncooperative informant's fingers in pursuit of information, Ridzik plants drugs in the informant's pocket so that he can blackmail him into giving them information. While this film demonstrates that the Soviet legal system does respect the rights of the accused and employs violence in order to obtain confessions, this film also demonstrates that some American police officers are not above corrupt, non-violent tactics to produce results. Ultimately, Danko and Ridzik are able to overcome their

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<sup>96</sup> *Red Heat*.

differences and bond over their similarities. Before Danko boards his flight back to Moscow, the two men exchange watches as a gesture of friendship.<sup>97</sup>

Released in June of 1988, Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* dubbed *Red Heat* “glasnost's first buddy movie” in a generally favorable movie review.<sup>98</sup> Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* and Canby both enjoyed Schwarzenegger’s performance for its comedic elements and generally found the film to be an enjoyable, if not entirely original offering from Walter Hill.<sup>99</sup> In contrast, Hal Hinson of the *Washington Post* argued that *Red Heat* represents Hollywood’s attempt to seize an opportunity “to capitalize on the thaw between this country and the Soviet Union.” Hinson stated that “even with the glasnost backdrop, *Red Heat* is far from custom-made; it's right off the assembly line.” Hinson found the film formulaic and Schwarzenegger’s character to be “virtually indistinguishable from any other he’s played” aside from his Russian accent.<sup>100</sup>

Though *Red Heat* performed fairly well at the box office, grossing just under \$35 million domestically with the thirty-first highest gross in 1988, its performance was substantially inferior to that of *Rocky IV*, which had the third highest domestic box office for all the films released in 1985.<sup>101</sup> Perhaps this film’s association with

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<sup>97</sup> *Red Heat*.

<sup>98</sup> Vincent Canby, “Red Heat- U.S.-Soviet Buddy Movie With a Chicago Backdrop,” *The New York Times*, June 17 1988, C14.

<sup>99</sup> Roger Ebert, “Red Heat,” *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 17, 1988, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19880617/REVIEWS/806170301> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>100</sup> Hal Hinson, “Red Heat,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1988, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/redheatrhinson\\_a0c8e2.htm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/redheatrhinson_a0c8e2.htm) (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>101</sup> “1988 Domestic Grosses,” *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/>

*glasnost* did not excite the public nearly as much as seeing a villainous, steroid-injecting Russian boxer getting pummeled by an American icon. The Cold War thaw instead delivered a violent, but otherwise decent Russian man with a pet parakeet. Captain Ivan Danko was no Captain Ivan Drago and the American audiences failed to respond with similar levels of enthusiasm.

The following year brought major changes to the geopolitical landscape. On February 15, 1989, the Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan amid sighs of relief from the Soviet people who had largely lost faith in the Soviet policy of interventionism in the Third World.<sup>102</sup> Even more significantly, the political strife in East Germany on the eve of the GDR's fortieth anniversary celebration resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. For the first time in nearly three decades, the East German people could freely cross the border into West Germany.<sup>103</sup> Historian H.W. Brands argues that American historical memory largely views the fall of the Berlin Wall as the end of the Cold War. However, Brands relays that some people did not believe that the Cold War had ended until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>104</sup> Regardless of the precise end date for the Cold War, filmmakers since have largely continued to follow pre-established patterns in the depiction of cinematic Russians.

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chart/?yr=1988&p=.htm (accessed May 29, 2011). "1985 Domestic Grosses."

<sup>102</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 377.

<sup>103</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 244-246.

<sup>104</sup> Brands, *The Devil We Knew*, 212-213.

### **Continuing Cinematic Trends in the Wake of the Cold War (1989-2010)**

A film based on the 1989 novel by John le Carré, *The Russia House* continued the tradition of a Western man rescuing a beautiful Russian woman from the dangers of the Soviet state. In the film, the British Secret Service receive a manuscript intended for British publisher Bartholomew “Barley” Scott Blair (Sean Connery) detailing the weakness of the Russian nuclear program. The British Secret Service subsequently recruit Barley for an intelligence mission to Soviet Russia to find and determine the credibility of the author of the book, a Russian scientist codenamed Dante whom Barley met several months prior at a writers’ retreat while in Russia on business. Barley reluctantly embarks on the British-led, CIA monitored mission, promptly falling in love with the Russian woman responsible for arranging a meeting for him with Dante. Though initially suspicious of Barley’s motives, Katya Orlova (Michelle Pfeiffer) soon returns his sentiments. Amidst the blossoming romance, Barley continues his mission and meets with Dante, who has plainly written the book in an earnest attempt to negate the need for a continued nuclear arms race. The Americans, and to a lesser extent the British, are unhappy to learn of Dante’s credibility because of the projected impact the revelation would have on the arms industry. Hoping to find out more exact information about Soviet nuclear capabilities, the British Secret Service and the CIA give Barley a list of questions, euphemistically referred to as “the shopping list,” to pass along to Dante. However, when Barley tells Katya the truth about his spy activities, she in turn tells him that her recent communications with Dante indicate that something is wrong and that he has very

likely been taken into KGB custody. When Barley arrives at the apartment where he was supposed to meet Dante, he instead finds KGB agents. With Dante already dead, Barley exchanges “the shopping list” with Russians in return for the safety and freedom of Katya and her family. At the end of film, Barley and Katya are happily reunited when she arrives in Lisbon with her uncle, and her two children.<sup>105</sup>

Following the established stereotype, Katya is a beautiful woman. She is also intelligent and brave, but unhappy. A cynical divorcee with two children, Katya warily observes the changes taking place in the Soviet Union with little hope of measurable improvements. She has chosen to help Dante forward his manuscript to Barley because she believes that the world would benefit from the release of his information, but cooperating with Dante ultimately results in her family’s safety being compromised. Though Katya initially resists Barley’s advances, she quickly changes her mind, falls deeply in love, and subsequently needs Barley to rescue her from the KGB and bring her and her family to the West.<sup>106</sup>

In *The Russia House*, the Soviet Russian state is depicted as inefficient, weak, deceptive, and violent. During one of Katya and Barley’s earliest meetings, Katya must go buy shoes before they can go to lunch. Katya explains to Barley that this is necessary because there have been even less shoes available since the start of *perestroika*. Barley is a little surprised by this, claiming that he thought that conditions had improved in the Soviet Union since the start of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Katya replies in the negative and tells him that the reforms have been met

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<sup>105</sup> *The Russia House*, directed by Fred Schepisi (1990; MGM, 2001).

<sup>106</sup> *The Russia House*.

with a proliferation of corruption and theft. When Barley cautions Katya to lower her voice while explaining these developments, Katya responds sarcastically: “Complaining is our new human right. *Glasnost* gives everyone the right to complain and accuse, but it doesn’t make more shoes.” In addition to failing reforms, the Soviet Russian state apparently lacks the nuclear strike capability to pose a major threat to Western nations. Though Dante attempts to reveal this information in the hope that it will result in the cessation of an unnecessary arms race, the Russians respond by sending KGB agents to kill Dante.<sup>107</sup>

While *The Russia House* painted a fairly grim picture of late Soviet Russia, the filmmakers also cast a critical eye on the greed of Western nations, in particular the United States. Russell (Roy Scheider), the American CIA agent, shows extreme dismay at the possibility that the arms race could end. He would instead prefer to maintain tense relations between the East and the West in order to sustain the prosperity of the arms industry. Barley betrays his own country by giving the KGB “the shopping list” in order to secure Katya’s safety and freedom. While *The Russia House* perpetuates the image of a venal Soviet state with poor material conditions, the filmmakers provide a more balanced portrayal by questioning Western motivations and patriotism.<sup>108</sup>

Released in December 1990, *The Russia House* was the fifty-fourth highest grossing film of the year in the United States, generating a domestic gross of nearly

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<sup>107</sup> *The Russia House*.

<sup>108</sup> *The Russia House*.

\$23 million.<sup>109</sup> Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* found the film unnecessarily complex and replete with clumsy dialogue and lackluster performances.<sup>110</sup> Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* argued that the film required “a lot of patience to watch” due to a lack of action.<sup>111</sup> Though *The Russia House* could be viewed as a modest success at best, the films that followed proved that the recycled cinematic clichés and stereotypes established prior to the start of the Cold War were not to blame for *The Russia House*’s lukewarm reception.

While the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in global geopolitical and ideological shifts, the film industry has largely continued to follow its long established patterns in the depiction of Russians. *GoldenEye* (1995), *Iron Man 2* (2010), and *Salt* (2010) have all served to perpetuate entrenched stereotypes of Russian people and Russia.

In *GoldenEye*, the first offering from the James Bond franchise since the end of the Cold War, Bond (Pierce Brosnan) is on a mission to stop Janus, a Russian crime syndicate with ties to the Russian mafia, from utilizing the GoldenEye satellite weapon to target the London Bank in order erase the bank’s records, steal the money, and cause a worldwide financial crisis. While on the mission, Bond protects Natalya Simonova (Izabella Scorupco), a beautiful and intelligent Russian computer

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<sup>109</sup> “*The Russia House*,” *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=russiahouse.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>110</sup> Vincent Canby, “*The Russia House*,” *New York Times*, December 19, 1990, C15.

<sup>111</sup> Roger Ebert, “*The Russia House*,” *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 21, 1990, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19901221/REVIEWS/12210303/1023> (accessed May 29, 2011).

programmer who survived the violent theft of the GoldenEye program disk from the satellite communications base in Siberia. Like Anya in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Natalya proves an asset on the mission, changing the GoldenEye access codes in order to slow Janus's progress. Also like Anya and Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia with Love*, Bond manages to seduce Natalya in the course of the mission.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to featuring another beautiful Russian Bond girl, the film also contains a trio of Russian villains. The affiliates of Janus include General Ourumov (Gottfried John), Xenia Onatopp (Famke Janssen), and Alec Trevelyan (Sean Bean). Ourumov is an opportunistic Russian General who exploits his position in the military in order to support Janus's operations. In the tradition of *From Russia with Love*, there is a female Russian villain, but she is the polar opposite of the androgynous Rosa Klebb. Former KGB agent Xenia Onatopp, a beautiful but deadly Georgian-Russian with the strongest of sex drives, has the distinctive *modus operandi* of suffocating men with her thighs. Alec Trevelyan, Bond's former friend and fellow agent in the British Secret Service, is the mastermind behind Janus. Though born in Britain, Alec is of Cossack Russian parentage and hopes to exact his revenge upon the British for sending his parents, refugees who supported the Nazis during World War II, back to Russia where Stalin ordered their execution.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *GoldenEye*, directed by Martin Campbell (1995; MGM, 2002). *The Spy Who Loved Me*. *From Russia with Love*.

<sup>113</sup> *GoldenEye*. Strada and Troper found the hyphenated nationalities of two of *GoldenEye*'s villains noteworthy. Strada and Troper, *Friend or Foe?*, 198. Onatopp's Georgian background is particularly interesting, as *Red Heat*'s chief villain, the sociopathic Victor Rosta, was also identified as a Georgian. While Ed O'Ross gravitated towards Stalin, a Georgian, during his character study for Victor, it is unclear if the *GoldenEye* filmmakers chose Onatopp's nationality with this distinction in mind. *I'm*



Released in November 1995, *GoldenEye* performed exceedingly well at the box office, grossing just over \$106.4 million domestically and over \$350 million worldwide.<sup>114</sup> While audiences clearly had not tired of 007's antics, Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* argued that the lack of a Cold War context hurt the film and accused the filmmakers of "[c]linging desperately to the idea of Russian villainy for old times' sake[.]"<sup>115</sup> In a generally positive review, Todd McCarthy of *Variety* approved of the film's setting, stating that "[m]oving Bond into the confusing quagmire of the new Russia has resonance on several levels[.]"<sup>116</sup> Whatever the motive in setting the first post-Cold War Bond film in the new Russia, the producers of the Bond franchise poised the series that for so long been associated with the Cold War for continued success. Though cinematic Russian villains no longer needed motives determined by the Soviet state, they could instead have equally odious associations with Russian organized crime and could be driven by a strong desire for revenge or greed.

In 2007, Harlow Robinson argued that filmmakers have largely "continued to represent Russia as an unstable and dangerous place" in spite of the positive economic and political developments that have taken place there since the beginning

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*Not a Russian (But I Play One On TV)*, directed by Jeffrey Schwarz, Special Feature on *Red Heat* DVD (2004; Lions Gate, 2004).

<sup>114</sup> "1995 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=1995&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). "Box office/business for," *GoldenEye*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113189/business> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>115</sup> Janet Maslin, "GoldenEye," *New York Times*, November 17, 1995, C17.

<sup>116</sup> Todd McCarthy, "GoldenEye," *Variety*, November 14, 1995, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117904690?refcatid=31> (accessed May 29, 2011).

of the twenty-first century.<sup>117</sup> Robinson's observation is valid, but not shocking. Throughout much of the twentieth century, international relations between the United States and Russia were largely tense and difficult. Certain events, like the Second World War or the thaw that followed the Cuban Missile Crisis, led to the temporary flourishing of kinder, gentler cinematic Russians. However, the long ingrained default pattern of depicting Russian men and the Russian state in a largely negative way continues.

The largely unpopular Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and continued discoveries of Russian spies have helped to sustain the relevance of villainous Russians. *Iron Man 2* and *Salt*, both released in 2010, contained unflattering portrayals of Russian men. In *Iron Man 2*, the title character's new nemesis was Ivan Vanko (Mickey Rourke), a menacing Russian seeking vengeance on Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) for his father's role in the disgrace and Siberian exile of Vanko's father. Comparable to Ivan Drago and Ivan Danko in more than name alone, Ivan Vanko is also a hulking man of few words with a one-track mind. Though Vanko and Danko of *Red Heat* share the distinction of possessing pet birds, Vanko has far more in common with the bloodthirsty and vacant behemoth from *Rocky IV*.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Harlow Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood*, 272.

<sup>118</sup> *Iron Man 2*, directed by Jon Favreau (2010; Paramount, 2010). *Iron Man 2* was the third highest grossing movie of 2010, grossing over \$312.4 million domestically. "2010 Domestic Grosses," *Office Mojo*, Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=2010&p=.htm> (accessed May 29, 2011). A.O. Scott of the *New York Times* found the film busy and ultimately dissatisfying, but liked Mickey Rourke's convincing and commanding portrayal of Vanko, stating that: "Mr. Rourke composes a fugue of malevolence in his own demented key." A.O. Scott, "Iron Man 2," *New York Times*, May 7, 2010, <http://movies.nytimes.com/2010/05/07/movies/07iron.html?scp=1&sq=Iron%20man%202&st=cse> (accessed May 29, 2011). In contrast, Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* generally liked the film, but deemed it a typical sequel of lesser

Also released in 2010, *Salt* featured some interesting variations on familiar themes. The title character of the film, CIA agent Evelyn Salt (Angelina Jolie), is a Russian spy from the KA program, a Cold War era program used to develop highly trained sleeper agents to take down the United States. Salt initially denies that she is a Russian spy and evades CIA custody while searching for her husband. However, Salt knows that the Russians have her husband and that she will have to fulfil her mission of killing the Russian President at the American Vice-President's funeral if she has any hopes of seeing him again. Using the venom from one of her arachnologist husband's spiders to put the Russian President into a convincing death-like state of paralytic shock, Salt convinces the world that she has assassinated the Russian President. Orlov, the director of the KA program is pleased with Salt's work, but reminds her that she should not have married unless it was of "great tactical advantage." To reinforce his point, Orlov orders the execution of Salt's husband as she watches. Though clearly shaken, Salt remains calm in order learn about the next phase of the plan before killing Orlov and all the KA agents present at the hideout. Salt ultimately succeeds in putting a stop to "Day X" and subsequently convinces her CIA superior to let her escape so that she can use her training to kill the extant KA agents who are lying in wait to attack the United States.<sup>119</sup>

Though on the surface Evelyn Salt has little in common with the archetypal female Russian, on closer examination she shares some similarities. Salt is beautiful

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substance than the original. Roger Ebert, "Iron Man 2," *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 5, 2010, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100505/REVIEWS/100509987> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> *Salt*, directed by Philip Noyce (2010; Sony Pictures, 2010).

and intelligent. As a highly trained sleeper agent, she is also a credit to the Cold War Soviet Russian state. According to Orlov, Salt's real name is Chenkov and she is actually the child of a talented Soviet wrestler and a female grand chess master. Presumably because she is of such fine genetic stock, the Soviet authorities fabricated her death at one month old, confiscated her, and trained her in the KA program. Chenkov entered the United States at the age of twelve by adopting the identity of Evelyn Salt, the orphaned daughter of two teachers who perished in a car accident in Russia while in the employ of the US Embassy in Russia.<sup>120</sup>

Salt seemingly remained dedicated to her mission until she fell in love with Mike Krause, a German arachnologist, who agitated for her release after the North Koreans captured her on suspicion that she was a spy. Though Mike did not initially bring her to the West, he initiated her safe return after the CIA and the KA program had both failed to rescue her. Like many of her cinematic countrywomen, love greatly changed Evelyn Salt. Love led Salt to change her allegiances from the KA program and Soviet Russian ambitions to her husband. This is evidenced in Salt's decision to feign obedience in the plan to assassinate the Russian President in order to get her husband back. However, after Orlov orders Mike's death, Salt vows to get revenge from those who have taken everything from her. Though her new ambitions coincide with American interests, Salt is not doing this for America, but instead for revenge.<sup>121</sup>

Salt shares some common characteristics with other female Russian film characters, just as her male associates from the KA program share similarities with

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<sup>120</sup> *Salt*.

<sup>121</sup> *Salt*.

villainous male Russian film characters. The KA Program Director Oleg Vassily Orlov cares only for the re-emergence of Russian dominance in the post-Cold War world. He coldly orders Mike's execution in front of Salt in order to verify her loyalty. Ted Winter, Evelyn's direct superior at the Russia Division at the CIA and another KA agent, suggested to Orlov that he take Mike into custody and kill him because he had correctly surmised that falling in love had changed Salt. Winter believed that Salt deserved to suffer for this, but he did not count on her surviving long enough to exact her revenge on him. Having chosen a solitary life of service to the Soviet state for himself, Winter apparently does not understand love, but instead thrives on his dedication to his mission of establishing Russian dominance.<sup>122</sup>

Though this film was set in the present, Evelyn Salt and American law enforcement are fighting a Cold War era enemy organization. Orlov promises that Russia will be strong and powerful again after the Russian sleeper agents from the KA program have completed their mission to bring down the United States. Orlov plans to achieve this by making it appear that the US has launched a nuclear attack on Tehran and Mecca, thereby insuring severe retaliation from Muslim terrorist organizations. In contrast, Russian President Matveyev is representative of the new Russian state and he does not seem to have any knowledge of the KA program's continued existence. He and the deceased American Vice-President are represented as

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<sup>122</sup> *Salt*.

Cold Warriors who forged a bond while attempting to secure peace between the East and the West.<sup>123</sup>

Released in July 2010, *Salt* was the twenty-second highest grossing film of 2010 in the United States, earning approximately \$118 million domestically.<sup>124</sup> In a generally favorable review of the film, critic Roger Ebert remarked that: “Although *Salt* finds an ingenious way to overcome history and resurrect the Russians as movie villains, neither that nor any other elements of the plot demand analysis.”<sup>125</sup> In contrast, Richard Corliss of *Time* magazine judged the film’s protagonist as incredibly relevant given the discovery of a Russian spy ring, including an attractive female spy called Anna Chapman, in New York City less than a month prior to the film’s release.<sup>126</sup>

Post-Cold War depictions of cinematic Russians have continued to borrow heavily from the long established stereotypes. Beautiful Russian women continue to fall in love with Western men who help to ensure their happiness and safety, even if only for a short while. In turn, Russian men, particularly those who seek revenge or seem unable or unwilling to let go of Cold War hostilities, are frequently depicted as deceptive, corrupt, and inhuman.

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<sup>123</sup> *Salt*.

<sup>124</sup> “2010 Domestic Grosses.”

<sup>125</sup> Roger Ebert, “*Salt*,” *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 21, 2010, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100721/REVIEWS/100729997> (accessed May 29, 2011).

<sup>126</sup> Richard Corliss, “Angelina Jolie: Worth Her *Salt*,” *Time*, August 2, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2005859,00.html> (accessed May 29, 2011).

### Conclusion

American disapproval of Russian political ideology began shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and continued until World War II forced a temporary reconciliation. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a geopolitical struggle for ideological, economic, and political dominance. Though enlisted by the United States government during World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War to make films that delivered specific messages about Russians and Communism, filmmakers have generally freely chosen to make films that reflected the current sentiments about Russia. However, filmmakers often chose to treat portrayals of male and female Russians very differently, regardless of the political climate.

Beginning with *Ninotchka* in 1939, filmmakers set the trend for the depictions of cinematic Russian women with little variation, regardless of the political climate. The few exceptions to this rule occur in films that are defined in large part by their exaggerated nature, including two over-the-top female villains in the James Bond franchise and Drago's equally off-putting wife in *Rocky IV*. Aside from these limited instances, Russian female film characters in films intended for Western audiences are beautiful, often intelligent, and frequently an asset to the state. Whether the women begin the film with high ideals, like *Ninotchka*, or are wary of recent Soviet statecraft, like *Katya*, or have feelings somewhere between these two extremes, they are frequently equally susceptible to the charms of Western men who

can guarantee their safety and material comforts by taking them out of the Soviet Union.

In turn, filmmakers have often chosen to depict Russia as a cold, drab place, replete with violent and inscrutable institutions. The fluctuating relationship between the East and the West often determined whether the filmmakers designated the functionaries of the Russian state merely intrusive or murderous. Depictions of Russian men have also varied based on the state of international relations. High levels of Cold War tensions meant that filmmakers chose to depict cinematic Russian men as villainous or as hapless pawns struggling against an oppressive state, while Cold War thaws encouraged filmmakers to attempt to capitalize on improved relations by offering more sympathetic portrayals of Russian men.

Filmmakers continue to recycle Russian cinematic clichés and stereotypes that emerged at least seven decades ago. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to alter widely held perceptions once filmmakers and other purveyors of popular culture have so successfully reinforced certain ideas for roughly three quarters of a century and it would be difficult and financially imprudent to suddenly declare their irrelevancy. Regardless of the precise reasons, it appears that cinematic stereotypes of Russia and the Russian people are likely to endure as long as they continue to attract audiences and make a profit.



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